Amendments to the claims:

Please amend claims 1, 3-5, 9-11 and 14-16 as shown in the following listing of claims. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (currently amended) A multi-component icon generated from characteristics of a data object where the characteristics include data object content and data object metadata, said icon comprising:

a plurality of icon portions ~~visual traits~~, each having a plurality of visual variations, each icon portion ~~trait~~ being variably assignable to any one characteristic of the data object wherein each variation of the at least one characteristic is visually represented by the icon by a corresponding one visual variation of a variably assigned icon portion ~~visual trait~~.

2. (original) The icon as described in Claim 1 wherein the data object is one of a word processing document file, executable files, software applications, audio files, image files, video files, and print spool queues.

3. (currently amended) The icon as described in Claim 1 wherein the icon portions are contiguous portions of the icon ~~visual traits comprise a plurality of icon portions~~.

4. (currently amended) The icon as described in Claim 1 ~~3~~ wherein the icon portions ~~visual traits~~ comprise at least one of a main body portion.

5. (currently amended) The icon as described in Claim 4 wherein the icon portions ~~visual traits~~ comprise at least side portions adjacent to the main body portion.

6. (original) The icon as described in Claim 1 wherein the visual variations comprise at least one of variations of colors, variations of shades of colors, variations of shapes, and variations of patterns.

7. (original) The icon as described in Claim 1 wherein the visual variations have secondary visual variations.

8. (original) The icon as described in Claim 1 being interactive with other icons corresponding to other data objects so as to visually indicate similarities and differences in characteristics of the data object and the other data objects.

9. (currently amended) A method of generating a multi-component icon from characteristics of a data object where the characteristics include data object content and data object metadata, said method comprising:

providing an icon having a plurality of visual traits each having a plurality of visual variations; ~~and~~

variably assigning any one of the visual traits to any one of the characteristics of the data object metadata such that each variation of a selected characteristic of the data object metadata ~~each variation of the characteristics~~ is represented by a visual variation of a selected ~~the assigned~~ visual trait; and

displaying the icon according to the assignment of the selected visual trait ~~visual traits~~ to the selected characteristic ~~characteristics~~.

10. (currently amended) The method of Claim 9 wherein the selected characteristic of the data object metadata ~~icon~~ is variably assigned dependent on user preference.

11. (currently amended) The method of Claim 9 wherein the selected characteristic of the data object metadata ~~icon~~ is variably assigned automatically.

12. (original) The method of Claim 9 wherein the icon is generated with a user initiated interface and variably assigning is selected through the interface.

13. (original) The method of Claim 12 wherein variably assigning is session based through the interface such that in one session a given visual trait may be assigned to a first characteristic and in a second session the given visual trait may be assigned to a second characteristic.

14. (currently amended) A method of creating a multi-component icon for each of a set of data objects from characteristics of the set of data objects, the characteristics including data object content and data object metadata, the method comprising:

determining a common characteristic of the data object metadata common to the set of data objects;

determining the number of variations associated with the common characteristic;

determining a visual trait of the multi-component icon having a corresponding number of visual variations that are greater than or equal to the number of variations of the common characteristic and assigning it to the common characteristic; and

displaying the customized icons for the set of data objects according to the assignment of the visual trait to the common characteristic.

15. (currently amended) The method as described in Claim 14 wherein the common characteristic of the data object metadata ~~icon~~ is variably assigned dependent on user preference.

16. (currently amended) The method as described in Claim 14 wherein the common characteristic of the data object metadata ~~icon~~ is variably assigned automatically.

17. (original) The method as described in Claim 14 wherein the icon is generated with a user initiated interface and variably assigning is selected through the interface.